Transcription: Grand Canyon Oral History

Interviewee: Winslow Burleson (WB)
Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)
Subject: 21 night solo river trip in January Lee's to Diamond Creek on the Colorado River
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Keys: Solo river running, winter, inflatable, Winslow Burleson

TM: Today is January 25, 2016, we are at Diamond Creek, river mile 226 on the Colorado River, and Winslow Burleson has just arrived from a 21 day river trip solo with an inflatable kayak and I dropped him off at Lee's Ferry, my name is Tom Martin. So we are going to drive up the Diamond Creek road and we are going to chat as we go.

WB: The ranger on the first day told me technically it was 22 days, because the 4th to the 25th. I don't understand it, they count the 4th and the 25th as the days of the trip. So I thought it was 21 days, but it is 22 days.

TM: I see. So probably 21 nights maybe?

WB: Yes, it was interesting to calculate how far I should be at a given time. Given that I started on the 4th, so it's the 5th, minus three...

TM: So let's back up a bit, What year were you born?

WB: Born in 1971, October 5, in Durham, North Carolina.

TM: North Carolina. What were your folks doing in North Carolina?

WB: My father was a professor at UNC, in population anthropology education, and my mom was a grad student in international relations.

TM: So, did you grow up, then, in Carolina?

WB: We lived there three years, and then we moved to Paris, France, and my dad worked for UNESCO there, my sister was born and my mom took care of me and my sister. We were in Paris three years, then moved back to Maryland, my mom, sister and I, and then three years later when I was nine, we all moved to Connecticut. My dad worked for UNICEF and UNESCO from '81 until he retired.

TM: So, is Connecticut sort of where you had your formative –

WB: Yeah, from ten on I was in Connecticut, and I went to some boarding schools, participated in scouting, became an Eagle Scout—things like that.

TM: What did you do your Eagle Scout project in?

WB: Well, my dad worked for UNESCO, and we had a chance to go to Nepal. I was offered drugs a number of times, and we learned that there wasn't any drug education in Nepal, and I did a project on drug education in Nepal with the UN "Say Yes to Life, Say No to Drugs" campaign.

TM: Fun. So, was it in Connecticut or in Nepal—where did you sort of become in love with wildlands?

WB: Well, my mom was a big camper, we always camped, I think even in North Carolina in second grade and third grade when I came back from Paris, there was summer camp, two-week, overnight camp, and we'd go camping out on that kind of trips, and then Mom always took us camping. We'd go for weekends, or three, four, five days, a lot in Acadia once we got to Connecticut, up in Maine. Some of the more significant trips were the scouting trip to the Philmont Ranch in New Mexico, they have a big ranch out there, with a couple thousand acres of area, thousands of campers. So that was the first long-term and, sort of, more—using dehydrated foods, longer treks per day—I think the longest trip was a twenty-mile hike, or an eighteen-mile hike over Mount Baldy. So that was what, I was maybe fifteen or so? Then I went to a boarding school, Thatcher, in Southern California, and they had extra day trips. They had a horse program, and the extra day trips were a week in the fall and a week in the spring, in which we went to places in the High Sierra, Mount Langley, and, winter camping. At the end of my senior year, I led a four-person trip with no faculty to the Tuolumne Meadow Peaks, and I forget the name of the peak, but one of the peaks in that area, Cathedral Peak, we climbed up, and we did some telemarking and winter camping and skiing—had a nice guy from Norway help us learn how to ski on the trip.

TM: This was your Senior year in high school?

WB: Yes.

[End of Part 1, start of Part 2]

TM: If you could pick up the thread from Interview 1, where you were in high school and doing a winter skiing trip, and go from there, that'd be great.

WB: Great, great, always great to be here again and have this chance to record all these memories while they're still fresh. So, I was talking about the winter skiing and leading a trip in winter in the High Sierras in the Tuolumne Meadows, and how I'd gotten comfortable with winter and cold and being outdoors and leading trips. And from there, we talked, I had a number of different outdoor experiences ranging, in college, from joining the Rice outdoors club and being part of a triumvirate three Eagle scouts—each of us were the leaders of that trip, and we chose to go to the Atchafalaya Bayou in Louisiana. We had three canoes, and we were out for four days and ended up swimming in the bayous and canoeing through the moss-laden trees and didn't really respect how difficult or dangerous that could be in terms

of the snakes and alligators and creatures that are in the water, the Gar fish in particular because we were swimming and didn't know enough about the environment at the time, but we had a great trip, and survived and came out very lucky and, I mean, that was one water trip.

We'd also talked before about my experience on the water with kayaking and my godfather, who had this West Virginia scholar's program, and how I learned to do some of the whitewater as a teenager. He was training his staff to be whitewater instructors and leaders for their trips, for the seniors in high school that he would train for their senior year to go and place into top colleges around the country for the benefit of West Virginia. He invited me and I got to learn how to read water and then I spent a summer on the junior and senior national whitewater races, preparing for them and then going to them and getting a six out of six in the junior nationals and 29 out of 29 in the senior nationals, getting 163% of Davey Hearn's race time on the exhibition race, but then a couple months later at the Housatonic races in the fall, I was able to beat one person in the race, finally, and then unfortunately broke my canoe, a C-1 actually, and didn't get back into it for a while.

So that was earlier, and then we had the college experience with Rice and the outdoors programs, and then I came out west to San Francisco, and worked as a curriculum developer for the SETI Institute, and continued to do some winter camping up in the Sierras with some friends, getting them into that, and enjoying that some more and telemarking, again, in the same areas that I was in before. Around Tahoe, actually. I then, got into scuba diving and worked my way up through to become an instructor in scuba diving, and my motivation in diving was to learn how to build an underwater tent, and to essentially do underwater camping. And so I wanted to learn as much as I could about saturation diving and the logistics of putting together scuba expeditions, and becoming an instructor was a good way to do that.

We also talked in the first section of this recording about my experience learning to swim. And how, when I did that…I had learned how to swim before I could walk. There was this one home movie in, I guess, '71 or 2, where they took me up from the pool and I crawled away from the edge of the pool. And they would stand ten, fifteen feet apart from each other and push me toward one another, my parents, and I couldn't stay at the surface, but I could swim forward. So they watched me grimace, and as I grimaced, I mean they would watch me be happy for the first eight to ten feet, and as I started to grimace they would pull me up to the top and I was able to get a little bit of air and they'd turn me around and celebrate and push me back to the other, back and forth. So I was this little torpedo going back and forth between my parents.

So, you know, completely comfortable in water, ranging from before I could walk all the way up through instructor in scuba diving and we're actually currently working on a patent for this underwater tent through NYU, so it's exciting to sort of see things move forward and come to culmination, which is also part of the motivation for doing these other kinds of experiences like becoming conversant in sailing, and I just bought a sailboat for deep-water blue-water exploration, to maybe do a longer trip to Bermuda or up to Greenland or something in a couple years. And, um, be able to think about all the safety and logistics and all the things that you need and how to be self-sufficient and reliant and have back-up structure and who's going to be on your trip and what skills you're going to have and all the different systems. Sewing and repairing a boat on the river, sewing a sail, building a fire pan, you have

pictures of the fire pan that I innovated out of turkey baster roasting pans, and the ranger had questioned that at the ramp and said, “Well, I don’t remember what we decided about turkey pans, let’s find out from the supervisor.” The supervisor was off Sunday, and so I pointed out that it was metal, that it was large enough, and that it was actually structurally built. It had the leg structure, it was manufactured, it was made out of metal, and it would be on top of a fire blanket. That’s an example of all of those things are coming together. So, this motivation ranging from: Can I do this thing? Do I have the skills? Do I have the knowledge to do it… and as I do it, I want to learn about alternatives.

Thinking about a trip in the canyon, one of the things we thought about was, is there a way to circumvent every rapid? If you didn’t know how to read the water, could you run or pull things down the side and just enjoy the twenty, thirty days that you might have on the river? I started calling around and getting some feedback on that, and I’m getting a bit out of sequence here, but, you know the sequence, the scuba diving and instruction, and the swimming—I also had a brief experience in a dry suit in scuba diving…

So then I went to grad school and did product design at Stanford and mechanical engineering and human-computer interaction in affective computing at the MIT Media Lab, and MIT had a sailboat where we could learn to sail and become very good at that, and so I got to learn a lot about the teamwork and logistics in sailing. So, from there, after graduating from the media lab, I got a job at Arizona State University, and came out here and came up to the canyon a whole lot. I’d read a New York Times article about individuals taking off from Lee’s Ferry, going up to Glen Canyon Dam, and that there was a shuttle that you could sign up and get your boats towed up there and have those boats—and you could come back down from the shuttle, and it was only six hours, but you get this entire wonderful experience of the canyon, minus the rapids.

So I had a canoe that I’d brought out from kayak water polo that I was playing at MIT, so I had a hard-shell canoe, and I set it into the water at 4 P.M. on a Friday, and started paddling upriver to Glen Canyon Dam. And, just before I got there, coming over the bridge, at Navajo Bridge, I stopped, I looked down, and I said, wow, those are big! One, it’s huge, and two, there’s a lot of ripples and turbulence that you see in the water, there’s no whitewater per se, but you can see things happening that you’re not sure, if you haven’t been on the water for a little while, how that’s going to affect you. And then I went into the gift store and I saw the “Death and Destruction in the Canyon” book, and a number of other, “Danger in the High Country” and things like this, and I wasn’t quite sure.

So I finally got on the water at 4 P.M. with maybe three or four two-liter soda bottles of water and I shoved my tent and sleeping bag into my shell and got everything in the boat and paddled, and I started hearing these beavers slapping, but I thought they were large fish because it was so dark, I hadn’t seen a beaver, and finally I pulled over and went to sleep; in the morning I saw the beavers swimming around and slapping. I went for a hike and then paddled all the next day, up past some fly fishermen and a number of people camping up there. But I knew I was only six hours away at any time, so I could always float down and I had a sense of safety and, you know, sort of the grandeur of the engineering phenomena of the Glen Canyon Dam, when you turn the corner and you see it, okay, well, I’ve got six

hours downstream, take it leisurely, stop for some hikes, and get back to ASU and work and other things.

So that was the first solo water trip, and that was, I don't remember the exact year but it was maybe 2011 or '12. And then, I got a job at NYU, and moved in 2014 to…

TM: So NYU is…

WB: New York University. And I joined NYU in the fall of 2014, in September, and was exploring a whole new place, and feeling that I hadn't gotten up to the canyon enough and had always wanted to experience again, the canyon proper, downstream from Lee's Ferry. I had experienced that in '89 with my family, on a commercial trip in which I had gone as, I guess I was seventeen, eighteen, had some experience on paddle rafts with a guide and a couple rapids with a ducky, very light rapids, and the magic of the LCR, Little Colorado River, and…remembered diving, jumping off of high peaks and into the water and up the side canyons and coming around and having kind of a spiritual experience in terms of seeing a sunrise one morning and feeling the sort of holistic experience of nature, and solitude, and I walked a little distance away from camp and experienced this, and just took a moment there as a teenager, to sort of appreciate how amazing and magical the space was and the time was. Another experience on that trip was one of the guides, they felt that maybe some of the younger participants on the trip weren't getting everything they could out of this experience, and weren't reflecting enough, and so one of the guides pulled a couple of younger participants aside and said, "Just sit here for a moment. Just remember this moment and this place and this space as much as you possibly can throughout your life." So that was another moment of reflection and peace.

So in the fall of 2014 at NYU I started looking into the canyon, and started looking into the lottery system and signed up and my girlfriend Cri encouraged me to do that. I learned about the difficulty of the lottery—essentially there's a 1% chance most of the year of getting a trip—there's this graph that shows that every date other than December 15 through January 15 has essentially a 1% chance of winning, but there's a 10% chance in the dates between those dates. So I chose January 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, weekdays in early January, that would allow me optimal chances to get to go. And then a couple weeks later, I got the e-mail, saying, "You won the lottery!"

So then I was like, okay, great! I'm going to go on January 4, 2016, almost a year from now, how…what does this mean? How do I do it, who am I going with…I got a permit for a sixteen-person trip, and I just chose whatever was available on those days. So, I've got a permit, it allows me to take anywhere between one and sixteen people and go up to twenty-five days in the canyon proper and extended days beyond that. So I needed to figure out what I was going to do. Got in touch with the Grand Canyon Boaters' Association, e-mailed some of the officers, got recommended to call you, Tom, and had a good conversation. Tom, you were super enthusiastic and said "Well, if you're a good swimmer, you wear a lifejacket, you've got a dry suit, you're willing to swim and comfortable in water…it's going to be cold, and it's going to be rainy, you want to enjoy the time there, you might want a fourteen or a sixteen-foot raft and you might want a big tent that you can hang out and enjoy, even when it's cold and wet, but you can do it, you can do it together with Cri or you can go solo, or any number of configurations. But

you also said that the best thing I could do is to get on a trip, between now and then, either on another river or on the Grand Canyon river… and here's the Facebook page where you can look for boaters who need people for their trips."

So I did that, and met up with Mike Connelly, who was leading a trip in August of 2015, and he put together a trip with eight people on it and three boats, eighteen-foot rafts from Moenkopi and there was a hybrid Moenkopi rental so they had one of their own boats and some of their own food and equipment and some of Moenkopi's food and equipment. There were some logistical issues about who was providing what.

TM: So I'm going to jump back in here for a minute, just because I haven't been associated with the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association for over a decade; we're not on speaking terms. So I'm trying to figure out…

WB: Oh, maybe—I'm not as familiar—

TM: Was it the Rafting Grand Canyon Facebook page? Is that how we connected?

WB: There were three people, I think, you and two others, of some association, that had e-mails or phone numbers listed.

TM: That would be Jo Johnson, and that would be Tom Roby…

WB: Right, so I connected first with Jo, and then you were on e-mail, and which organization is that going to be?

TM: That's River Runners for Wilderness.

WB: So I was looking into, which is also related, or has some sort of raft related—

TM: No.

WB: No, okay. So it was River Runners for Wilderness. So, my approach to this was, internet searches, not having a lot of familiarity with the landscape of the organizations or their interests or their nature, and, as you just alluded to, there are a number of different organizations and they have different interests and complications.

TM: Right, okay, I just wanted that for clarification. Now we're going to jump back into, you met these people, you rented equipment, and…

WB: Okay. Great, so, we show up and get picked up in Phoenix by Mike, and four hours later, we spend one night, in Flagstaff; we end up on the river with a whole crew of people I don't know. Mike agreed that if I could read the water from my early whitewater days, that he could teach me to raft. And so that was the basis, and if I was willing to have some of the passengers that he was wanting on the trip, then I was going to be able to row my boat and have those passengers.

So I had this wonderful experience where I had Jose from Peru, a 70 year old gentleman who had been everywhere, even Antarctica. I was practicing Spanish and rowing and learning how to read the water and hopping on and off the rafts and loading and unloading and learning about the strapping and rigging and the oar locks and the cooler and the groover and the paco pads and all of these amazing things that are all configured to lead a very comfortable life in expedition for a group in the Grand Canyon. Setting up the kitchen with three to four tables and having all those jobs and it would take a long time to set up and tear down every day, and we'd say, do we need four tables or three tables or two tables? Can we leave it rigged? So I learned a tremendous amount and saw the canyon again and learned that I could do this water, and that I could enjoy the experience and be competent and confident in my ability to run the river and tying things off, understanding issues of entrapment with a strap that might be too long, and what to do about it, or the fact that you need to use your painter line or bow line to tie up and tie off, otherwise you might lose your boat…Very basic, but very important, and that kind of vigilance and consistency that's important, both as a captain on a group trip, but also potentially on a solo trip.

One of the guys on our trip had done a solo trip. I forget his last name; Josh was an individual who had done a sea kayak trip through the Grand Canyon and he had been through a number of times so I had a lot of chances to ask him about his trip and he said it was super cold, and he was in dry suits, and that the kayaks allowed you to cheat some of the bigger water. Putting all that together I began to understand that it was possible to do this…. I had about a month after that trip to decide what kind of trip I wanted to have. At work I had a number of big proposals, and then I got Bruce Cline's book called "Never Boat Alone* Until You've Read This Book." So I read that book in late September, and decided at that time that this made sense and I could do a solo trip, and that that's the way I would do this trip. So I moved from coming off that trip with Mike and his crew, and Mark and Stacy Egan, and Josh and Jose, to leading my solo trip.

I think one of the first things I did think about was food. And I had this sort of proof of concept which was that, if I wanted to eat 3,000 calories a day, and a small jar of peanut butter has 3,000 calories of peanut butter in it, then I could go with as little as twenty-five cans of peanut butter. So that was the size and shape of a peanut butter menu. So I knew how much food might weigh, or be, or how waterproof it could be, and from there, I did think about different varieties of food for a while, but then I got much more into the need, the sort of interesting and desperate need, to get all the equipment lined up and to begin to own it, to get the AIRE LYNX II, and finally decide on the boat.

For a little while I was considering building a boat, and I would love to build a boat in the future. With the sailing, I think there's another interest which is, can you fly somewhere with your boat and then put it in the water and live on it? And that can be in whitewater conditions or not. So, this whole trip in some real respect is a heavy version of being able to do that, and that's a piece of it. Reading Bruce Cline's book, you get into a state of reflection…there were two or three other seminal resources at that time which were the videos online. One of the groups does a self-support kayak video and they were doing a lot of description of what the equipment was and how to do it and what the groover tube looks like and there's another couple of resources out there on how to build the poop tubes; most of the trips in this space go for short times. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve days. So, there was the added logistics of my calculation where I started seeing that my weights were going to potentially be well above the

difference between, say, the payload of the AIRE LYNX I, which was 350 pounds, and I weigh 225, so 125 for everything, for twenty-five days, it, started getting into 175, and I'm calling the company saying, "What does your payload mean?!" and they're saying "Oh, it's one third of the water line of the buoyancy of the boat." And you're saying "Well, okay, well maybe, you know, half!" So, anyway, they have the AIRE LYNX II which is a 450 pound payload, so you get an extra 100 pounds of leeway. And, I didn't ever weigh the total amount, but I think it was up closer to 400 at the outset, between me, at 225, and all the equipment.

Then Tom had the great suggestion of trying out all your equipment before you fly to Arizona, so I got my boat in mid-December and got my dry suit in mid-December and hopped in them and out onto the water. I played kayak water polo during the summer and fall and I'd been in the canyon in the summer, so I had a lot of good water experience in the past year, but not in the winter, and not in the boat, and not with the dry suit. So, I got all that together, learned that the AIRE LYNX is an inflatable and needs slightly longer paddles, for example. And so I had got these Warner whitewater paddles, but then realized that I needed a different paddle for the boat that I had. So you learn these things as you practice them and get there and how everything's going to come together and be put together.

I came out to Flag with three checked bags and two carry-ons and ended up spending an intense day and a half both finishing a grant and buying $400-500 worth of food, paddles, an extra paddle… I had my life jackets…All the logistics, and a huge amount of packing. Just getting everything in place and understanding that the stoves were going to work. Testing my stoves, I realized that they were too old and hadn't been used in a while and I needed to buy a stove. So, you go and buy a stove. But it was intense, getting out here and packing it all up, seeing if it's all going to fit, and then getting up to Lee's Ferry. Showing the ranger the fire pan, and building the fire pan--I hadn't put the fire pan all together until the last night. I knew I could do it and I knew what it was going to look like and what the parts were, and I had my tin snips and my screws and washers and I finally put it all together.

This whole process was unfolding until you're finally ready! You, Tom, were great, both with the shuttles and spending the night and helping me rig. Also, we had this wonderful experience where we went over and saw the stagecoach trails from the…1820s?

TM: 1870s.

WB: 1870s. Yeah, and the insignia from the division that had gone through there and then the petrified wood and this is right across from Lee's Ferry, and a bit of Native American land there. And we rolled the kayak a couple of times and swam, or I did with Tom giving some suggestions, just assuring that I was able to do all that with the load, and it worked very well.

Then I slept and got on the water, you know, I did my inaugural swim every day in the '89 commercial trip, a number of people would swim right at the beginning and in the summer, in 2015, every morning before getting on the water I would take a quick dip, often before running rapids and every time we stopped for lunch and everything, I just loved the water, and I would always just get a dip in there. Even now with a dry suit, which is a totally different experience because you're still dry after you do it, I did my inaugural dip and I remember coming out of the water and seeing Tom's face, seeing your face like

“No, I don’t want a hug! I’ll do a high five, but I won’t give you a friendly hug as a send-off.” Because I was all wet, which made a lot of sense on your part.

So, yeah, I got everything strapped on and headed downriver, saw you at the bridge, or didn’t see you at the bridge, I saw somebody at the bridge and they said “Hello!” and I wasn’t sure if that was you or somebody else but I waited a while and either I got there before you, or after you. Then the second day…The first day was snowy, and the second day was completely cold and wet and rainy, and I hadn’t logistically sorted out all the food yet. So I decided that I needed to do that, so I read all the park regs again, I read to understand, now that I’m on the river, where can I stop, where can’t I stop, what are the safety precautions, water filtration, when am I going to filter the water versus using chemistry and chemicals, all of those just to remind myself right in situ on day two, and even before going on any of the bigger rapids, wanting to make sure everything was rigged down. So that entire day, I spent going through my fanny pack and the safety and logistics of what’s going to be in the fanny pack, how many jars of peanut butter or…different people travel with six Clif bars, and I replaced three of them with a jar of peanut butter, which is higher calories, I had the water and the fire making, the GPS spot, I used an ACR ResQ Link, that was just another alternative. And testing that…I had tested it before, but just testing it one more time, and then…Just making sure everything was in its right place, especially food, because I had just bought all the food, but I didn’t know how long it would last or how much I should be eating each day. I knew I had plenty of calories, but I didn’t know how much per day… so I wanted to sort that out, and I did a pretty good job of sorting that out.

And when I got back on the water, the number of big rapids increased day by day with my capacity to do more and more rapids, I think the third day, or second or third day, I swam for the first time in the water. What was happening was my boat was heavy enough with all the stuff that. I’d go through the beginning of the rapid well, hit my line and then the waves and water would start filling into the boat; it’s self bailing, I was fine on that level, but at that point I would maybe get caught in an eddy line, or a trailing wave in a rapid, and so, swimming wasn’t early in the rapids, but later in the rapids. I think the biggest contributing factor was that I had a lot of heavy stuff fairly high. In my early stages of being on the water, I would just sort of flip over. And then I would exchange my knee strap for my hand, so I would be right there with the boat, and I always remembered and learned to hold my paddle from my earlier whitewater days, and so I would ride out one or two more waves, grab these wonderful little straps and we’d done a flip strap, but I found that it was trailing in the water, providing drag and friction and also, I felt that the handles were working well enough that I wasn’t using the flip strap, so I just took the flip strap off and just used the handles, because the kayak itself has these two nice flip handles built into the bottom of it. So I would use the flip handles and heave myself back up in and get back in.

One of the really nice things about the boat is that it was big enough that you could relax. Just big enough. So, unlike a hardshell, you could lie down a little bit, putting your legs on either side of your gear in front of you, but at least not be in a hardshell where you might not feel your legs for days and days at a time. You could put both your legs on one side and you could lie perpendicular to the boat. There was enough sort of leisurely time… I remember one time, I was getting really tired at the end of the day, and I sort of lied down and I was almost drifting off to sleep while I was on the water, I was like “This doesn’t seem very good, you’ve got to sit up and pay attention.” So, I mean, I was in the lulls

between rapids, but, you know, if you fall asleep, you might not still be in the lulls between rapids. But the boat was very comfortable in that respect.

And, I was making all of these discoveries all the time, things like that. First, you're experiencing the total magic and wonder of the cliffs and the river and the eddies and the vibrance of the water that you're challenged by. Some of the great big highlights of the trip were in the rapids and in Crystal and in Granite, and understanding just how big these waves were and how small I was, where this whole thing is five to ten times bigger than you are, and you are in just the pocket of that wave. But you're still coming up over the wave, and staying upright, and hitting your lines and able to do it, and it's just this amazing, completely involved "flow" type experience, where you are completely in that.

I think in the summer trip in 2015 I had hit every line or done every rapid without flipping the raft, we had an eighteen-foot raft, that had ended up going through Lava and I got swept out of the boat. I hadn't had enough footholds or other things, and this was the first sort of wave that completely came up onto the boat and I got pulled out, and Josh turned around and was like "All right, we're going to hit cheese grater—oh, you're not there…" And I hung onto the line and Josh pulled me back in and manned the oars for rest of that rapid.

So I had this opportunity in Lava, where this winter, I was able to try it again. I pulled over, scouted, and I think, you know, Lava's one of the later rapids, and there's so much mythology and buildup to it, that it has its own kind of psychic tension. Even though I tried to minimize that, unlike many of the scouts, where you're right there at the side of the river and feeling the water, for Lava you're up above, you don't experience the water in exactly the same way. You're seeing the magnitude and the spectrum of what you can and can't do in this water and not even sure how it's going to work out. So I was looking for some of the lines we saw in the summer, the V wave, going into the hole, and the cheese grater, and I knew the V wave part, but the next one didn't look the same as in the summer, and it wasn't clear if it was going to work out.

So I got back down to the boat, did my little dip, to get ready for being wet if that occurred, and followed the bubble line, hit the V wave really well, made it through the next hole miraculously, ended up still buoyant and upright, and hit into the next set of waves, which turned me 180. So now, I was still buoyant and upright, and I was still quite surprised about that, but I was navigating cheese grater in reverse. I managed to float by that and had a nice pillow cushion sufficiently to river left that it pushed me off, and got through a couple more trailing waves and realized that I had done it! And I just let out a big scream and said "Yeeeaaaah! This is amazing!" It worked, and so I think I let off some of the tension of appreciating Lava. You have that hole, you've got Vulcan's Anvil, and then you've got what Josh had called Lava Lake, before, where you're paddling across flats for maybe half an hour or twenty minutes, depending on how aggressively you're going… you're on the still water, hearing the increasing roar, and so all of that was coming in, and I finally got through that. It was pretty amazing!

Another concern or experience I had was, as I approached Crystal there was a helicopter in the air flying around. They were apparently up on a butte or a cliff with a potential rock climber… I don't know what they were doing, but as I approached, they weren't interested in me and weren't telling me not to run

the river and so I was scouting, but this chopper was overhead and so that created this new interesting tension—highlighting potential dangers.

We talked about the best things in the first interview, and the bad things, and I think the best thing was the boat and the logistics and all the amazing teamwork, both from all the different trips that I've been on, and from people that were giving me so much advice and so much generosity to make this all possible. The amazing magnitude of the canyon, too, I'd been doing a lot of meditation and mindfulness, both on the summer trip and had a chance to get back into that in that amazing space in the canyon during my winter trip.

The solo aspect is…you know, I didn't see people for ten, twelve days for the latter part, which was wonderful and amazing, just this space of being alone and the air traffic quieted down, then in the middle of the trip you had the luxury of Phantom Ranch and I had two great meals there, dinner, social time, and breakfast. Met a bunch of people, and a number of people took great pictures of me and showed them to me…That's another thing, on a solo trip, it's very hard to get pictures of yourself. You get a bunch of selfies, but not really in the rapids or on the water all suited up. So I got a couple of pictures from people at the river there, Stacey Egan made this amazing watercolor picture, and I drew a watercolor on my first day that was nowhere near as good, but was similar, it was the same topic, it was the boat and rigging and the canyon. It was interesting. So I just want to thank everybody for everything that contributed to making this an amazing trip and bringing it all together.

TM: Cool. Very cool.

[end of Part 2, beginning part 3 (1/25/2016)]

TM: So how did your food work out?

WB: I think the food worked out really well. As I said, everything worked out really well. The only casualty was my sunglasses at Whitmore, I left them at a lunch stop I guess by accident or something on the trail. But other than that, everything stayed with me, everything worked. Food worked, it was pretty simple; I used the Whisper Light stove and boiled half a liter to a liter of water every morning for breakfast, with freeze-dried eggs or oatmeal, a little coffee, and then lunch was cheese or beef jerky and a tortilla, and dried fruits and a chocolate bar or Clif bar, and then dinners were the soups or mashed potatoes, olive oil, dried tomatoes, and pouches of salmon or tuna. And lots of nuts, lots of peanut butter. One of the funny things was that I ended up drinking peanut butter at times. I was able to squeeze it out of the can for lunch when I was hungry, so that was a new experience for me.

TM: So what would you have done differently in the food department?

WB: I think I would have just had a wider variety of the different packages of the soup dinners, and I would have tried them so I would have enjoyed them better. I think you mentioned talking about people you met, I met people both before and during the trip, a number of people have used these Indian or Asian food mix pouches that are sort of premade dinners, almost meals ready to eat where you just heat them up…I'm not sure, I could have added some of those, I didn't think of pouches, other than the

pouched salmon or pouched meats, I didn't have any wet food other than that and the oil. I didn't use that much of the oil, but I felt that the oil, like the peanut butter and sugar, all three of those are very high in calories and having them around and useful was something I wanted to have in my arsenal, but it wasn't something I ended up using as much of, other than…yeah, I got tired of the peanut butter eventually and I think I still have two of the eight jars left. Also, some people in their fanny packs had six Clif bars or something, so I threw a jar of peanut butter in there, sometimes eight ounces of cheese, as an alternative to one or two of the Clif bars.

I also didn't get into the habit of making lunch, so there was a little bit of challenge in my setup, just from the captain's boxes, these little plastic portable open-close boxes weren't dry boxes for me. So what I'd hoped would have been dry boxes ended up not being dry boxes, and that meant that you're going into a watershed bag for your food items, which involves a little bit of derigging. So I ended up eating a little bit out of the safety pouch, so I would overpack. I'd have six to eight Clif bars and I'd eat two of the Clif bars--every night I'd get into the situation of ensuring that the pouch had the right amount of food for the emergency contingency that it might need to serve--I'd have to replenish it. But that didn't work so well, and likewise on food, I didn't have it all planned out… I spent a whole day, the whole second day was a rainy day, very cold, the first day I was launching in the snow, and then moving into rain. Personally, I prefer snow to rain, it's drier, and this day ended up being wet, rainy weather. I spent that second day in my tent, coordinating and managing the rest of the food so I knew how much was week one, two and three.

TM: Where did you camp your first night, do you remember?

WB: It was just above Soap, perhaps? It was like mile 10 or 12 or…what's Soap?

TM: Soap is going to be…

WB: 14?

TM: No, not quite that far, maybe 11 or 12-ish.

WB: Yeah, so I camped before Soap. When I launched, I was rigged, but didn't feel rigged for rapids. I could survive a swim, but didn't want a full, sort of thrashing swim, and so I wanted a day or a second rigging to go through what we had done on the beach at Lee's, to make sure everything was as solid and dry as I wanted it to be. So I camped before the first rapid, I forget what stop…

TM: Soap? Was that…so you ran Badger on your first day…

WB: Yeah.

TM: And then a lot of flatwater down to Soap.

WB: Yeah, so I camped just above Soap and then I think throughout the trip there was this calculation of how close do I want to be to the next rapid, and how late in the day do I want to run a rapid. I ended up spending an enormous amount of time getting out of my tent and onto the water. At first, it wasn't

before, say, noon or so that I would get onto the water. So I would end up paddling until 4:30 or 5, and I started to learn that given how much time it was taking me, that rigging every day, versus the alternative of doing longer days for two days and then a day off, worked better for me. So it gave me the chance to go on some of Tom's wonderful hikes, and occasionally take a second day off, too. I had done these two days of hard rowing, and one hard day of hiking, and the next day I just slept in the tent most of the day. That was maybe on the sixth or seventh day, I sort of took a day off where everything sort of just came back together and I think that was the day that Bruce Cline floated by. I heard this voice around 2:30 in the afternoon saying "Anybody home? Anybody home?" and I was asleep so I was just waking up and, in general, I had wanted to be as solo and alone as possible, I didn't know if this was a park ranger or who it was, and so I ended up just sleeping in the tent and, a couple days later, I ended up passing Bruce, I think just after Phantom, so a number of different things.

So in terms of the number of people I met, the first day, when it was rainy, this guy came past my tent, saw the boat, and said he was on a nine-day kayak trip with three people in kayaks and two rafts, and asked if this was a place to scout Soap. I said it was, and that I probably wouldn't see him again, and we both wished each other a good trip, and he ran back and seemed very friendly and super excited, I think it might have still been their first day, given that they were only on nine days, so he was just supercharged, like "Time to scout the rapid!" I guess only one of them was scouting the rapid, and they would just take each other's word for it or something. So that was the first person, and then the next group I had on one of my layover days, climbed up one of the peaks. I don't know what camp this was at, but I went on this nice, let's see…it was, how do you say it, Kakwagunt?

TM: Kwagunt.

WB: Kwagunt, and Tom's book on river hikes had some interesting options, though. You could go up the wash, up the creek, all the way up to the plateau, or you could go pretty much straight up the wall, then over a little crest and up the second part of the wall to the plateau up near the crest. And I attempted that first, getting out of the tent around 10:00 and getting up to the second part of the wall around noon or 12:30, and finding out that after two or three of these eight to ten-foot overhang areas, I wasn't able to do the next one, it was…I mean, I might have been able to do it, but it was more risk and exposure than I wanted to take, and I decided to turn around at that point.

What I had hoped to do was go up that crest and then see if there was a back way around back to the creek, because it looked like the topo allowed for it, but the guide didn't suggest whether it was there or not. But having not gotten up to the top, that was off for the day. I got back to the creek at around 1:30 and then ended up going up the creek and enjoying that quite a lot as well, thinking that if I got up there early enough, then I could maybe at least do the other side, maybe up to the crest from the back side, although that would push it quite a bit.

So I enjoyed that long hike and ended up at the upper reaches of the Kwagunt watershed for that portion of it, and had in my mind this question, I want to see what happens at the juncture between this watershed and the other watershed. At some point this creek either is going to turn into another creek that goes that way, or something else… I had this sort of intellectual, geographic, geological question in

my mind at the same time that the sun was setting. Not setting per se, but getting later into the afternoon, it's always setting… it's getting to be 3:00 and now it's 3:30…okay, I have fifteen minutes to answer my question. So I go fifteen minutes further and "Okay, I haven't answered my question but I can do ten more minutes!" So I do ten more minutes of upstream and "Oh, I'll go to this little bluff." So I enjoyed myself and the motivation of this question and didn't get to answer that question myself at that time, but ended up enjoying coming back leisurely down through that area, and got back to camp around 6:00, 6:30.

But on that day, as I was going up around noon, or a little before noon, around 11:30, I saw fifteen or sixteen kayaks float by, some of them passing up towards my tent, but they were far away, so that was a second group that I saw. I got back to my tent and continued on and one morning, two or three days later, this was around maybe the tenth or so, tenth or eleventh, I saw a larger group, and this was a sixteen-person raft trip. They were floating by my camp and I waved to them, but didn't really talk to them much, as I was packing up, and I passed them at their lunch stop about an hour or two later again. I was running one of the first rapids, I forget which, I don't know the sequence that much, but they were very interested to see how I would run that rapid, so they all got up and watched and I went past and through, or I guess I went down and scouted and went in, but the scout was far enough away from lunch that I didn't overlap. Then I spent both an evening and morning at Phantom. I got there around 4:30 and I got to the ranger station at 4:45, they were having steak dinner at 5:00 and I got signed up for the stew dinner at 7:30.

TM: Good job!

WB: I also got signed up for breakfast at 7:00. Which was earlier than I was normally eating breakfast. So yeah, I got stew dinner, I checked in with the ranger there, he didn't seem to care whether I checked in or not. I gathered that they might have different ranger systems for the river group or the Phantom group, so there wasn't really an overlap. But I had told someone that I was going to be there on the thirteenth, so I figured I might as well tell someone I was there on the thirteenth. I tried the pay phone, which was going to be like forty dollars for a collect call or something, and then I found someone with a calling card and ended up making the call, but it didn't work anyway. So the next morning, had a little bit of text connectivity out on a hike; somebody else had found the only spot in Phantom where there's some texting, and got a couple texts off to my girlfriend and to Tom and…I guess one of the first opportunities to see somebody was at Navajo Bridge, going way back to day one. I was supposed to see Tom there, I ended up there and nobody was on the bridge, and I ended up on a sand bank and took about half an hour, forty-five minutes to have lunch, saw a number of cars go back and forth, saw two people come over to the edge of the bridge and say "Hey!" I didn't know whether that was Tom or not, I ended up waiting a little bit longer, and then decided that I would head on my way and hope that it all worked out.

That was the first person, so back to Phantom, stew dinner, sat next to a Brit who had done a rally, had been on rally cars and a mechanic for thirty-seven years and worked for Ford and been to the canyon a number of times and had just done a mule trip down with his wife, and met maybe about ten or twelve people in three or four conversations in the course of both dinner, and then the two-hour social hour

from 8:00 to 10:00, and then at breakfast, again, two or three people. It was fun to see everybody starting to debrief and talk about their trips and what was exciting for them. A couple of people saw me paddle in and said “What is this? You don’t even have a GoPro? Are you crazy? Are you worried about the rocks? Are you for real?” These kinds of exaggerated responses and comments. This one guy commented as I pulled my dry suit off that it was like a birthing experience, so there was some sort of camaraderie with people that were enjoying the canyon, in the canyon. It was a lot of fun and good to switch over from a long period of isolation or being solo to having some social activity, and then enjoying it more, then, again, being isolated afterwards. Going into Phantom, three or four days out, I thought to myself, “Wow, this is really interesting, I feel safe because I know there’s breakfast like ninety miles that way.” I started laughing out loud at myself about that--this kind of distortion of time and space and the reality of how isolated or not you are.

At Crystal, I camped above Crystal, and when I woke up there was a lot of helicopter activity. They were well below the rim, clearly aware that I was camping there, flying once or twice over my camp where I was still two miles away from Crystal. And then I got on the water and paddled down and saw the helicopters more, flying up and down, one helicopter, a red helicopter, and it was flying up over the butte by Crystal and back behind the butte and back over Crystal and I got out to scout and clearly it was aware of me, but not interested in me. I felt that if there were anything wrong with me moving forward they would somehow let me know… There was some anxiety with respect to approaching Crystal, thinking that I might encounter some kind of incident or something that might have occurred. I had also seen a line hanging down from the helicopter, this 200-300 foot line that had a little pouch or something at the bottom of it. I didn’t know if that was an emergency supply kit, I think I saw them lower it, or I just witnessed it and it looked like it was being lowered. But I didn’t know if they were trying to position something or offer me something or any number of situations. But, you know, I figured they would make it pretty clear that I shouldn’t run the river if I shouldn’t run the river. So I went ahead and ran Crystal and it went well, and then they just hung out over this butte for the rest of the time and I paddled into the distance.

Then I saw this group that I had passed and passed again, this larger sixteen-person group, and they offered me some tea and we caught up. One of the women that I met at Phantom Ranch had said, “If you see a group with a woman named Sierra, say Lois said hello. This’ll be ‘canyon mail!’” I asked if Sierra was in the group and she was and she had apparently already run into Lois at Phantom Ranch, so it was a redundant message. But it was kind of fun to see that happen. Then I went on, paddling through that group after having some tea and meeting up with people on the water, and then came around a bend and saw a solo on a cataraft, and came up and said hello and asked if he was solo and how it was going, asked his name, and his name was Bruce, and then I said “Well, what’s your last name?” and he said Cline. I said “Oh! Wow, I got your book!” Bruce Cline had written the book “Never Boat Alone* Unless You’ve Read This Book.” And so I said “Oh, I got your book, I’m so happy to see you” because in the book, he kind of mentions that he might not make another trip, that he’s been on a number of these and he’s getting older and they’re getting tougher, so I was really happy to see that he’d got back out there and gotten back on the water solo, and he was saying “I’m 62, and I don’t know…This is definitely my last trip.” And he made that clear in the book before, so, you know, I think there’s probably one or

two more in him at least, maybe more. But we had a great time talking about his boat and my boat, and he had been on a trip with the Aire owner and this group that I had just passed caught up with us. They wanted to camp at Bass Camp, and Bruce had already set up at Bass Camp. And so this group took pictures of Bruce and me in front of our two Aire boats, and so we'll send those pictures off to the Aire owner.

TM: Cool.

WB: We compared everything, our food, our tent setup… Bruce said he rigs in two hours, from the time he gets up, I was taking three or four hours, I finally got down to two hours toward the end when I was more streamlined and…I think if I had done the food better and the allocation of where my equipment was better, then it could have been a lot easier. So Bruce got a couple good pictures, and promised to exchange notes at the end of the trip, he told me about a number of different people coming up and some people doing, not speed records, but fast trips, that I might encounter, and at that point I was a little worried that I wasn't going to get much alone time downriver from Phantom, because, of all these different groups that I had seen that day, and that I was told were coming up. Then there was a lot of air traffic, and that was…in, how do you say it…

TM: Kwagunt?

WB: Yes, there was a lot of air traffic over there, there was more traffic after Phantom, there were a lot of helicopters coming in and out of Phantom, two or three that morning, and the canyon was getting sort of less pristine or solo in my experience of it. And I learned that they wanted to go down to Deer Creek, the sixteen-person group, and spend a couple days there. I was in a phase where I was able to do one or two long days. So I got just past Deer Creek, and spent my other day there, but didn't see anybody again for the rest of the trip. In the first part of the trip, there was this sense that I could always look upriver and wonder if somebody was coming around the bend. In the later part, I got kind of used to maybe being alone in the lower part. Fortunately, the air traffic also trailed off in that middle to lower section, and so there was more isolation and solitude, which was a very nice experience.

TM: Did you see the, uh, so, while you were on the water, today is Monday, yesterday, Sunday, a solo kayaker completed a thirty-four hour two-minute transit of the canyon from Lee's Ferry to River Mile 277. He would have passed you about three or four in the morning yesterday morning. Did you see him at all?

WB: I didn't see him, I was generally in my tent as early as 7:00pm or 6:30. I would cook from my tent and be in my sleeping bag and I stayed in my tent generally until 7:00 or 8:00am; a good ten or twelve hours. On some nice nights, I would have the tent door open and be looking at the moon and stars, on others I was just staying warm in the tent.

TM: Right. And then, three or four days before then would have been another group of three or four kayakers that, again, would have gone by in a group, and if they weren't making any noise and they did that in the night they would have paddled right past you and you wouldn't have even known it.

WB: Yeah, they might not have known that I was there, either. You know, I wouldn't have had any lights on, I would have only had the kayak on the shore tied up, which they may or may not have seen.

TM: Right, okay. And they certainly wouldn't have wanted to stop and chat because they were on a mission. So those people passed you and that was fine. Okay, anything else?

WB: There was one comment, someone asked me what rapid I enjoyed the most at Phantom, and one of the things, Sockdolager was the one, I remembered from the summer that there had been a change in one of the rapids, due to, at the end of our trip, actually, we had a lot of water on our trip in the summer, we had sleet and rain and hail in the summer, in August. And some of the major trail work and washouts around Phantom occurred then. And I had forgotten which rapid was the one that had changed, I didn't know if it was Sockdolager or not. But I had a sort of cheat sheet to the rapids that we had used in the summer, I forget the name, McClaren or…

TM: Jim Michaud?

WB: Jim Michaud, yeah. So I had that with Mark Egan's notes on it as well, and so I had that both in the summer, although I didn't pay much attention to it because I was just trying to keep up with the group, and this time I relied on that quite a bit, and found it very useful. But when I got to Sockdolager, I read it and looked at the river and it didn't line up for me. I didn't like what the notes were saying relative to what I was seeing in the water, and I decided to do what I wanted to do, and was very successful at that and enjoyed it and I think that moment, I forget what day that would have been, but probably day eight or seven, maybe eight or nine, was a day of sort of enjoyment and confidence. Saying, okay, I've got this down, even when the information isn't presented, consistently; I have the aptitude or capacity to make good decisions in my own right.

I think that experience and then Granite, in a big way, was just a magical experience of, wow, how big this wave is. Just hitting the bottom of the trough of a wave and then surviving it, surviving a float as opposed to a swim, was a huge experience. Likewise, in Lava, which I had been swept out of in the V wave in the summer, going into this, it looked, quite different, and to some extent less navigable this time than in the summer. In the summer, I understood how the V wave lined up with the next set of waves, and that it was possible in the raft to perhaps go through that second set of waves, even though I got swept out in that second set, right above the cheese grater, but this one was different on the solo trip…I could see doing the V wave, but getting into that second set, it was not entirely clear that it was going to work. At the same time, it was still the best option. The left side didn't look any better by any means, and so I set up, hit where I wanted to on the V wave, hit the second set, and miraculously, was still upright, having then found a way to be turned around, and so then I went through the cheese grater in reverse, and then managed to get turned back around and get ready for lower Lava. That was a real thrill, there was a moment where I was like "Okay, this worked!" and gave out a big yell.

I think Lava itself has this whole sort of intimidation factor, it's the last major rapid, one of the bigger major rapids, and then scouting it is, in some ways, a little bit more--the word that comes to mind is "staged". It's up there on the cliff and it's this large set in front of you and you can see it all but you don't know how it's going to go. It's obviously not staged, it's all natural, but you have this, unlike many

of the other rapids where you're down and close and can see the water, here you're seeing the master view and what might happen to you along the entire path. So I think there's an element of psychology to Lava, that was also significant to both experience and then to go through. To go ahead and get on the water and understand that this is big water and that you might flip and might swim and that that's very likely to be okay.

TM: What was the biggest rapid you swam in?

WB: I don't remember specifically, because most of my swims were at the ends of the rapids. What happened for me with the boat was that I would get the boat full of water. It was a self-bailing boat, but it would become full in the rapids, so I was able to hit my lines and do what I wanted to most of the way, but by the time it became full, and then if I wasn't able to keep it pointing head-on, I would get sideways and full, and that's when I would flip, later in the rapids. Also, earlier in the trip, I had more weight high. And so in that condition, with the heavy boat and the high weight, later in the rapids I would swim, say, the last two or three waves, and then, in the eddy or still in the waves, be able to turn it around and come back up. I didn't swim in any of the big, big rapids, so…I mean, in the middle of them. I think possibly in Granite, later in the path I swam, but, I swam enough in the different smaller rapids that I kind of didn't care as much about it. The swimming wasn't a big factor for me, it wasn't intimidating, and I was swimming enough that it didn't really make sense to record it at that point.

TM: It's interesting, because it just seems like that's a pretty stable boat, and I'm surprised that the waves didn't kick you out, but you were kicked out at the bottom of the rapids.

WB: I think maybe by then I was both full of water and some of those eddy lines were sort of torqueing and pulling, and, I mean, a couple swims were because I hadn't treated the riffle or rapid as a full rapid. And so I was maybe not in my knee braces, and then it was like "Oh, you want to make me swim? Okay, I'll swim." It was a read and run and it was pretty straightforward and then it was sort of the last little inaccuracy, if you will, or something catching the wrong way. I thought that was okay. I was taking a lot of Bruce's advice and running things pretty conservatively, and particularly later in the day, after 4:00 P. M., I would know that I was tired and not want to do a major rapid and then also, if there was a bigger rapid but not a major one, then I would also cheat it on the inside or find a way to maybe make it a little less significant.

TM: Nothing wrong with that.

WB: Although some of them are pretty significant, some of them are, you know, Crystal and Granite were just big massive sheets of turbulence, and you're scouting them and you can scout the major features, but there's so much, and some of them are quite long, that you can't know how it's all going to go.

TM: So would you go again?

WB: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

TM: And what would you do different next time?

WB: Well I think the food thing was one, I think the dry boxes were one, those were two of them. I think, the logistics for the amount of getting things into camp and out of camp could be optimized. I didn't like that much in the summer, and I found it taxing in the winter. In the summer, I ended up spending a lot of time sleeping on the boats, in part because I didn't enjoy the sand or the unevenness or the loading and unloading of everything. I had everything I wanted all in one place on the boat, and things worked pretty well there. I think if I were to do it alone again, I would maybe want to do something like that, like optimize the raft, push the sort of technology envelope a little and come up with something innovative, come up with kind of a raft platform that could either be anchored or tethered in an interesting way.

TM: Would you take a raft, or would you take the Lynx again?

WB: Oh, I think the Lynx is much more suitable for a solo, personally, my issue for a solo was I don't like the idea of not being self-sufficient in terms of being able to recover from a flip. And as you get towards a raft, you're getting into situations where you have potentially more payload, or have your stuff, harder to flip the raft, much harder to recover from. So I wanted to be very self-sufficient on that front, I still would want to do that. I mean, if it were a raft, I'd want to go with an Aire-style raft--very lightweight. I think a raft is fun, but I think to be honest, the Lynx was a lot of fun. You're down in the water, I think once you experience the water it is a lot of fun to be in the water, and after a while, some of what would have been fun at the beginning of the trip was not quite as fun, because you've seen a lot of it and it's not as big as some of the big ones you've done and it's like, okay, there's another medium rapid before a big rapid, right? So I think one of the things I would like to do on another trip would be having a non-solo trip, it would be interesting because--I would probably want to do it in the Aire, or a solid kayak, a hardshell--because in that situation you would have the backup that you don't have as a solo trip, where you would be able to play with some of the harder, more aggressive elements of the water to a greater extent than you might on a solo trip. And so I think that contrast of enjoying all that the water has to offer in a trip would be something I'd want to look for in a future trip. But I think either a solo or a trip of that nature, where you're able to either be in the ducky or the hardshell, would be of interest. The ducky was great as opposed to a hardshell for a longer trip, because you have a lot of room for storing lots of stuff, and you also have a lot of room to relax in. You can sort of stretch out or lie down and still be on the water. It's a platform, as opposed to, a single sort of universal joint, if you will.

TM: Right, that you have to load up, and then you have to work yourself into, and suit yourself up in, and is very regimented.

WB: And then endure the fatigue or constraint of your muscles and legs. So I don't know that at this time, I would have the flexibility or pain tolerance for a hardshell for that duration. I just haven't been in a hardshell for that period of time for a long time, so I think a hardshell would be pretty difficult for me, as opposed to the ducky. But the ducky has all the advantages. I'm not sure, other than more equipment, what the advantages of the raft would be for a solo trip. I know Bruce likes the cataraft, he had an Aire cataraft.

TM: Do you know how long it was?

WB: So mine was twelve, I think his was maybe sixteen? And I think he was on a longer trip, he was carrying all his own water. So he had water for the entire trip. He had…it was a thirty-day trip and he was at twenty gallons or something. So, I mean, these were sort of different styles and different experiences.

TM: Anything else before we wrap things up?

WB: Yeah, I think if you're thinking about it, I would definitely figure out how to do it. I would also say that one of the very impressive things is the number of people that are willing to help and help you figure out how to do it and what's right for you. As you commit to doing something, the forces conspire to make it possible, and I think that's a huge lesson that I'm going to take away from this, towards things that I want to do next. Just, as you get closer, getting help from Tom, getting help from Bruce, getting help from locals, from Stuart, the guy on the Lynx 1, from a local solo kayaker in New York who loaned me his dry bags, from Cri, and all of these people. And then from the summer trip, all of the people on the summer trip giving, participating and sharing their knowledge, people on the summer trip who had done solo trips before helped me think about whether this was possible and what it would be like. The dry suit salesman helping me understand the merits of one or the other dry suits and what additional equipment and insulation you want to have. All of this learning and putting things together and making things possible was very, very helpful.

TM: Cool.

WB: Thank you, Tom.

TM: Well, thank you.

WB: Thank you for making it possible, you've been so, so generous with the shuttles and all your information and inspiration.

TM: Well, it's been fun!